

Expectorants comprising N-acetylneuraminic acid.

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Abstract

An expectorant capable of acting on the rheological properties of sputum and capable of directly promoting the ciliary motion. The expectorant contains N-acetylneuraminic acid

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Description

EXPECTORANTS comprising N-acetylneuraminic acid

The present invention relates to an expectorant and a method of removing sputum by using the expectorant. More particularly, the invention is concerned with an expectorant made of N-acetylneuraminic acid having an effect of directly promoting ciliary motion while acting on the rheological property of sputum, as well as to a method of removing sputum by such an expectorant.

Viscous secretion exists in the airway of the human body. The secretion has an important role in imparting suitable temperature and humidity to inhaled air. The matter generally referred to as "sputum" is constituted mainly by this secretion.

When its amount is moderate, the secretion in the airway is unconsciously swallowed or expelled with the breath, but usually is never expectorated. Thus, any expectoration suggests that there is something extraordinary in the respiratory system. On the other hand, accumulation of sputum to be expectorated in the airway is liable to cause an infection via the airway. From this point of view, the removal of sputum is a matter of great significance in the medical treatment of patients who suffer from a disease in the airway.

Sputum is often very viscous and sticky so that expectoration causes the patient pain. In order to facilitate expectoration, therefore, a medicine which is referred to as "expectorant" has been used. This medicine is given in a general dosage orally or by injection. The expectorant thus administered serves to remove sputum by diluting the sputum through an increase in secretion by the mucosa of the airway, promotion of separation from the mucosa and enhancement of ciliary beat. This, however, involves various clinical problems concerning mechanism and effect.

The present inventors have therefore made intensive studies and found that sialic acids may serve as an effective expectorant which can be used locally.

This invention has been accomplished through a study on the sputum-removing effect offered by N-acetylneuraminic acid among the sialic acids.

Accordingly, an object of the invention is to provide an expectorant mainly composed of N-acetylneuraminic acid as well as a method of removing sputum by local dosage of the expectorant which acts on the rheological property of sputum and which directly promotes ciliary beat so as to facilitate the expectoration.

Brief Description of the Drawings:

Figs. 1 and 2 are illustrations of the effect of N-acetylneuraminic acid on the rotation of ciliated cells; and

Figs. 3 and 4 are illustrations of the effect of terbutaline and acetylcholine on the rotation of ciliated cells.

The expectorant of the invention contains, as an effective component, an N-acetylneuraminic acid which is expressed by the following general formula:

According to the invention, this compound is used in such a form as to permit the use of a known local administration method such as inhalation of the pulverized compound from an aerosol.

The effect of N-acetylneuraminic acid as an expectorant is attributable to the following two functions: namely, physiological change for easier expectoration by acting on the rheological property of the expectorant such as its fluidity, yield value, spinnability, stickiness, stress relaxing time and so forth, and promotion of sputum transportation by cilia through direct activation of ciliary beat of the cilia in the airway. These functions have been confirmed through an experiment in which the rotary motion of a cilium group before the application of N-acetylneuraminic acid was compared with that after the application, using cilium cells in the human airway, as

well as through an experiment in which the sputum conveying property of cilia of frog palatine mucosa in the state after the application of the N-acetylneuraminic acid was compared with that before the application.

In clinical use, the expectorant of the invention is used in the form of, for example, the following preparation.

As the first step, N-acetylneuraminic acid is well ground and mashed in an agate mortar to reduce it to a fine powder of a grain size ranging between 1 and 20 microns. Lactose is then gradually mixed with the fine powder and diluted 10 to 20 fold. Then, 20 to 40 mg of the mixture is put in a capsule or envelope by a known method. Preferably, a capsule is used for powdered aerosol, and an envelope is used for liquid aerosol.

Whether the expectorant is used as a powdered aerosol or liquid aerosol is determined on the basis of the symptoms of the patient. The dose is usually 0.5 to 5 mg/time. The expectorant should be administered at least two times a day but this may be changed if the symptoms warrant it.

The results of pharmacodynamic tests and acute toxicity tests showed that the number of dosage per day need not be limited.

The expectorant is administered, when used in the form of a powdered aerosol, by means of a powder spray such as an insufflator or nebulizer, and when used as a liquid aerosol, by a liquid atomizer such as a nebulizer.

The effect of the invention can be summarized as follows: the expectorant of the invention exhibits a superior sputum-removing effect when administered locally. Namely, it changes the property of sputum to ease expectoration by acting on the rheological property of sputum, e.g. yield value and viscosity. On the other hand, it directly activates the ciliated cells to promote expectoration by ciliary beat.

Description will be now made hereinunder as to the way of synthesis of the compound of the invention, as well as the effect of the same, through preferred examples.

Examples :

Effect of N-acetylneuraminic acid on Ciliary of Palatine Mucosa of Frog

Bull frogs (furnished by Saitama Test Animal) weighing 300 to 450 g were used regardless of sex.

N-acetylneuraminic acid as well as acetylcholine chloride (furnished by Sigma Kabushiki Kaisha) were used as test substances.

Mucociliary transport was measured by the particle transport method. After decapitation of a frog, the surface of the palatine mucosa was separated with minimized damage and fixed to a cork plate in a Petri dish which was then filled with 20 ml of Ringer's solution (trishydrochloric acid). The palatine mucosa was left in this state for 30 minutes before the commencement of measurement. For measurement, the Ringer's solution was removed and fine pieces of cork (capable of passing pharmaceutical sieve No. 5 but not capable of passing No. 6) were placed on the surface of the palatine mucosa, and the time (in seconds) required for the cork piece to move 1 cm was measured. The duration of movement, i.e., moving speed, was measured also in the state immediately after the removal of the Ringer's solution or pharmaceutical solution.

It was confirmed that N-acetylneuraminic acid causes an acceleration of the ciliary movement of palatine mucosa in a certain dose-dependency, as will be seen from Table 1

This result was substantially equal to that produced by acetylcholine (control) at concentrations of 10^{-5} and 10^{-4} g/mol, as will be seen from Table 2.

N-acetylneuraminic acid was confirmed as producing substantially the same ciliary movement promoting effect

as the acetylcholine which has been known as being effective in the promotion of ciliary movement. N-acetylneuraminic acid therefore, is expected to facilitate expectoration. The acetylcholine, however, cannot be used as an expectorant because it causes undesirable effects such as bronchoconstriction and crinogenic action, although it promotes ciliary action. In contrast, N-acetylneuraminic acid can be used as an expectorant because it effectively promotes ciliary action, without being accompanied by the detrimental effects produced by acetylcholine.

Examples 2 :

Effect of N-acetylneuraminic Acid on Rotation of Ciliated Cell

Using ciliated cells from the human airway and frog palate, rotation of cell groups due to ciliary beat was observed before and after application of N-acetylneuraminic acid, in order to confirm the effect of these agents on the ciliated cells.

Human ciliated cells were collected from a normal trachea by means of a bronchoscope, the ciliated cells being separated by rubbing the bronchus while observing through the bronchoscope, while the collection of frog ciliated cells was conducted by rubbing the palatine mucosa, without being specially careful. The cilium cells thus obtained were floated in Medium 199 (prepared by Gibco Company) and groups of ciliated cells, each consisting of several cells exhibiting rotary motion due to ciliary motion, were sucked up by a microsyringe in such a manner as to avoid damage to such cells, using observation through a phase contrast microscope. The groups of cells were transferred to a cover slip and one drop of chicken plasma (prepared by Difco Company) and one drop of 50% chicken embryo extract were added to the cells, thus forming clots. The rotary motion in the clots was recorded by means of a video recorder and the number of rotations per minute was measured. The agents was dissolved in the Medium 199 and were injected through a tube attached to a rose chamber. The states of rotary motion 5 minutes, 10 minutes and 15 minutes after the injection were recorded by means of a video recorder, and the number of revolutions was measured.

With application of N-acetylneuraminic acid (10^{-4} to 10^{-1} mg/ml), the rotary motion of the cilium cells is gradually accelerated starting immediately after the application. 5 minutes, 10 minutes and 15 minutes after the application, plateaus were observed at application rates of 10^{-3} to 10^{-2} mg/ml. In these plateaus, the speed in revolutions per minute was about 25% higher than that in the Medium 199, as will be seen from Figs. 1 and 2. It was confirmed also that the rotary motion of the cilium cells is increased by application of 10^{-3} to 3×10^{-2} mg/ml of terbutaline (5-[2-[(1,1-dimethylethyl) amino]-1-hydroxyethyl]-1,3-benzenediol), in a certain dependency to the dose. The effect was particularly remarkable 5 minutes after the application, as can be seen from Fig. 3.

It was confirmed also that the speed of rotary motion of the cilium cells is increased by the addition of 10^{-3} mg/ml and 3×10^{-3} mg/ml of acetylcholine. Speed peaks of the rotary motion were observed about 10 minutes and 5 minutes after the application when the amounts of addition were respectively, 10^{-3} mg/ml and 3×10^{-3} mg/ml. In both cases, the rotary motion stopped 13 minutes after the application.

It was confirmed that terbutalin and acetylcholine, which are known as being effective in promoting ciliary beat, promote also the rotary motion of the cilium cells. N-acetylneuraminic acid was confirmed as also being effective in the promotion of the rotary motion of ciliated cells. It is considered that the rotary motion of the ciliated cells is transmitted into ciliary beat, thereby facilitating the expectoration. This clearly shows that N-acetylneuraminic acid will be effective as an expectorant.

Example :

Effect on N-acetylneuraminic Acid on Sputum

Mucociliary transport rate (hereinunder referred to as MTR), i.e. the rate of transport of sputum by cilia, was measured using frog palatine mucosa. At the same time, physicochemical properties of the sputum before and after application of N-acetylneuraminic acid were compared.

The sputum used for the specimens was collected from 12 samples of patients suffering from chronic obstructive lung disease. N-acetylneuraminic acid was added to the specimen sputum in the ratios of 5 mg/ml sputum and 1 mg/ml sputum, and the specimen was left for 1 hour at 4 DEG C before measurement. Sputum which had not been treated by N-acetylneuraminic acid was used as a comparison example. A palatine mucosa obtained from a decapitated frog head was kept at constant temperature and humidity until the mucus liquid of the frog itself depleted. The specimen sputum was placed on the dried palatine mucosa, and the speed of movement of the sputum was observed through a noumenal microscope, thus measuring the MTR. The pH value of the sputum was measured by means of an electronic model HM-SAp pH meter, while the spinnability was measured by a device developed by Nagaoka and Yamanaka (disclosed in Transactions of 2nd Symposium of Cough and sputum, published July 20, 1979). The yield value was measured by Dulfano's double-tube method which is shown in the American Review of Respiratory Diseases, Vol. 104, p88, 1971.

As shown in Table 4, five out of six samples treated with 1 mg/ml of N-acetylneuraminic acid showed a reduction in pH value (pH 7.31 +/- 0.40), while the remaining one sample showed a slight increase in pH value. Increase in the yield value was observed in three samples, while three samples showed a reduction. The yield value was unchanged in the remaining one sample. As to the spinnability, five samples showed a reduction, while one sample showed a slight increase. The samples which showed reduction in the spinnability exhibited a tendency to increased MTR.

Example 4 :

Acute Toxicity Test of N-acetylneuraminic Acid

A test was conducted to examine the acute toxicity of N-acetylneuraminic acid, using mice and rats, by means of intravenous injection, subcutaneous injection, per os inhalation.

(1) Test Animals

(2) Application Density

13 to 15% (W/V) dissolved in distilled water

(3) Number of Test Animals per Group

10

(4) Observation Period

14 days

(5) Method of Calculation of LD50

By Litchfield-Wilcoxon method

The result of the test is shown in Table 5 below.

Inhalation was conducted by 1-hr exposure to mist. Values in parentheses show 95% reliability level.

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Claims

1. An expectorant capable of directly acting on the ciliated cells of the airway and on the rheological property of sputum, comprising n-aceylneuraminic acid of the following formula:
2. An expectorant according to claim 1 in the form of an aerosol for inhalation.
3. An expectorant according to claim 2 wherein tie dose of the effective component is 0.5 to 5 mg/time.
4. Use of n-acetylneuraminic acid for the preparation of an expectorant capable of directly acting on the ciliated cells of the airways and on the rheological property of sputum.

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FIG.1

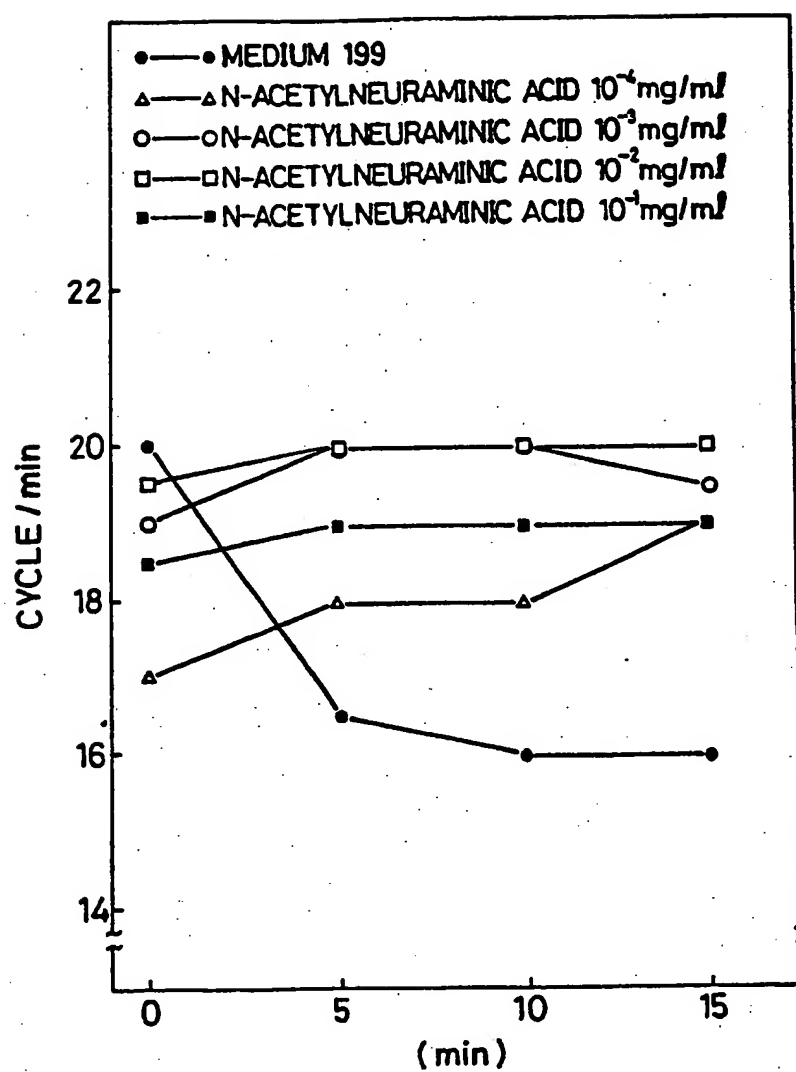


FIG.2

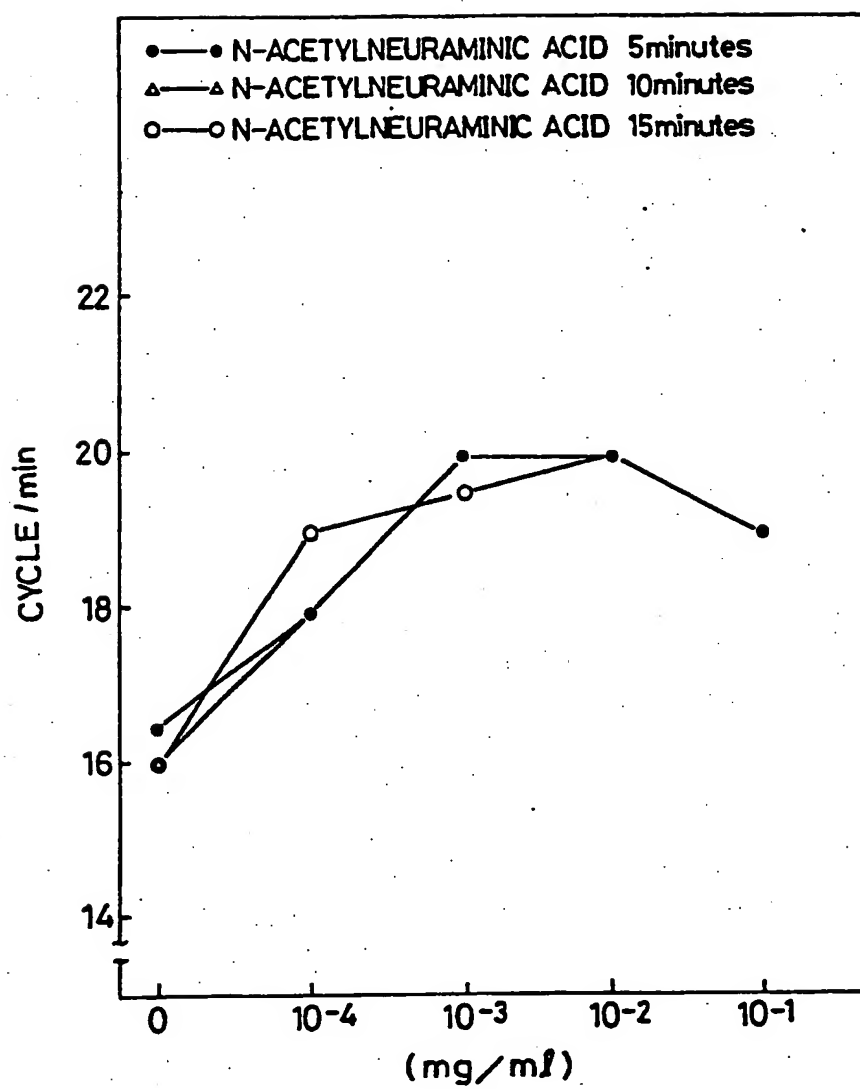


FIG.2

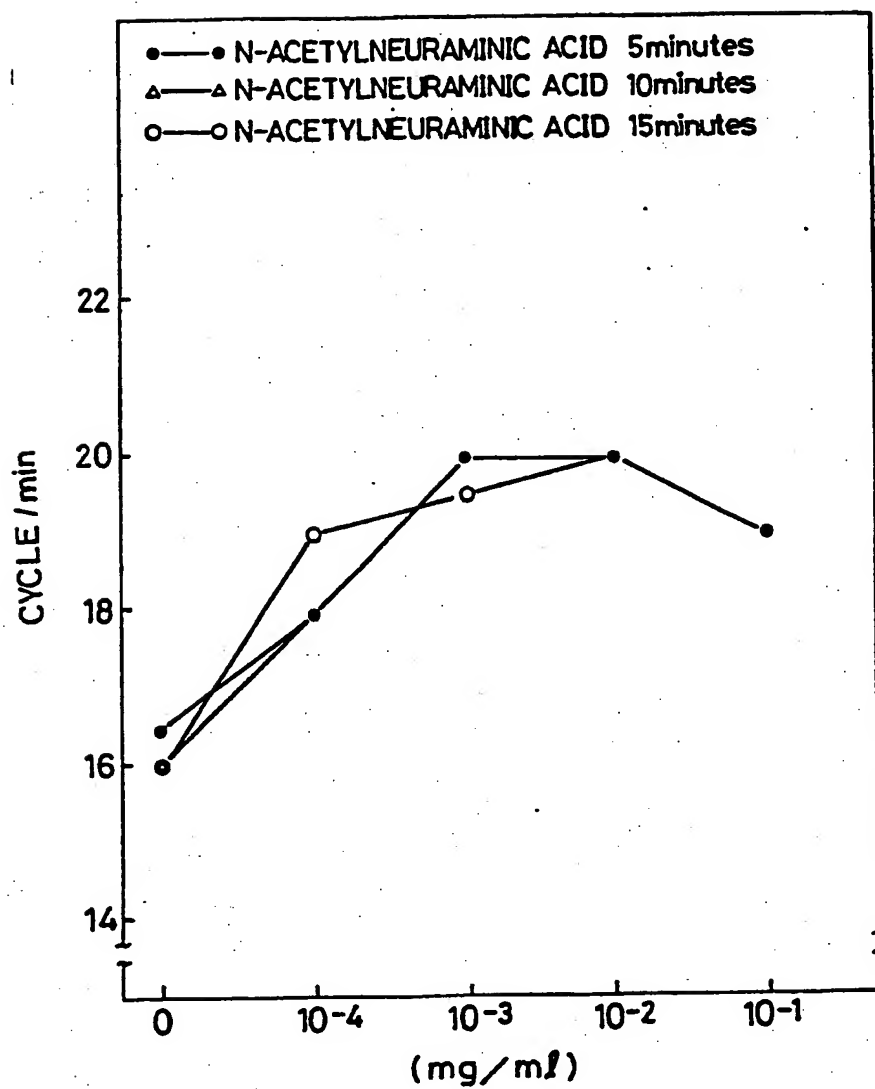


FIG. 3

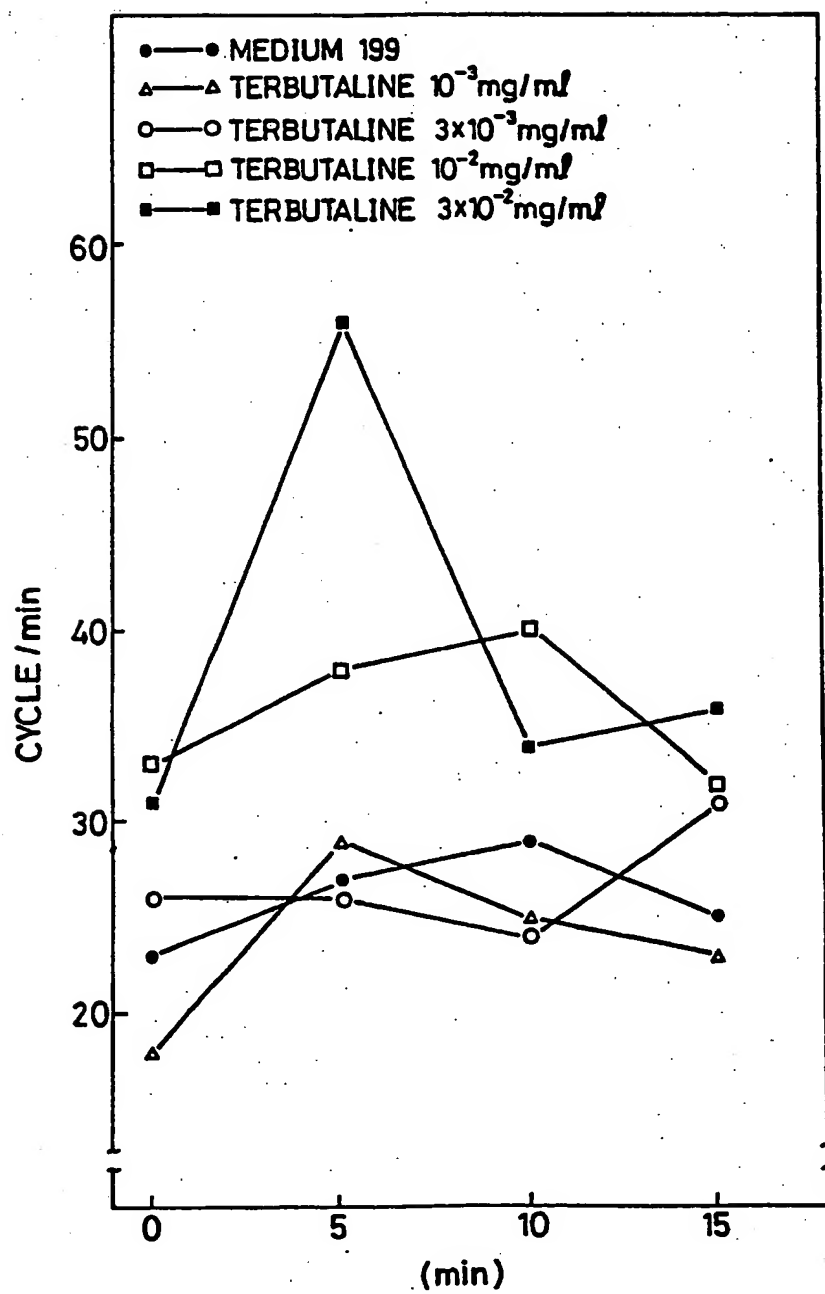


FIG. 4

